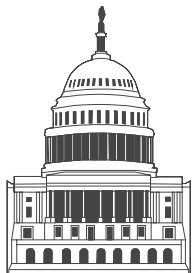


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**2003-04  
EDUCATION  
UPDATE**

**"The proper  
upbringing and  
guidance of children  
is a parent's most  
important  
responsibility.  
Parents must have  
adequate  
information about  
the scholastic  
achievement of their  
children and the  
standing of the  
schools they attend."**

**-Chuck Poochigian**

**MARCH 11, 2003**

# Senator Charles S. Poochigian



## Capitol Update

### EDUCATION UPDATE

#### Release of New API Ranks and Changes to the API

In 1999, the Legislature passed the Public Schools Accountability Act (PSAA), which delineates the components of California's education accountability system. Integral to that plan is the Academic Performance Index (API), which measures each school's academic performance, sets annual growth targets, determines if growth targets have been met, and identifies eligibility for awards. The API is *the* tool California uses to measure and compare student and school performance.

#### Calculating the API

Currently, the API growth and base results are calculated using standardized test scores (on a scale from 200-1000, with 800 being the state "target"). Originally, the API relied on scores from the SAT-9, the nationally norm-referenced test that California utilized for the first stages of our accountability system. In an effort to more closely align with the new rigorous state standards, the California Standards Test (CST) was developed. Consequently, the API calculations have been adjusted away from emphasis on the SAT-9 and more toward the CST, a new Norm-Referenced Test (NRT) called the California Achievement Test, and the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). These annual adjustments are the reason two separate API results (a base score and growth score) are released annually. Once adjustments to the API calculations cease, schools will only receive one annual API score. The plan, as set forth by the State Board of Education, is to have all final adjustments completed by 2006.

#### The 2002 API Base and State Rank (Released February 20, 2003)

The 2002 API Base reflects the state's increasing emphasis on the CST and incorporates the CAHSEE results for the first time. This is different than the 2001 API Base, which relied more on the SAT-9 results. After a school's API is calculated, the California Department of Education (CDE) ranks every school in California within ten deciles. Additionally, they create a Similar School Rank (SSR) that attempts to rank schools against other schools that share similar demographics. This "similar schools" rank seems to perpetuate the unfortunate notion that educational outcomes are based on a child's socio-economic status, and may be used to excuse inadequate achievement.

CDE contends that comparisons cannot be made between the 2002 Base API and the 2002 Growth API due to the inclusion of results for the CST and CAHSEE in the new Base API that were not used in previous calculations. However, it still may be useful to draw comparisons between how schools have been ranked over the past years since all schools have been subject to the same test adjustments at the same time.

**Please visit the CDE website for more information and to obtain your school's results:**

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/psaa/api/>

<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ope/sarc/>

### **Models of Success**

A Pacific Research Institute report from August 2002 (*They Have Overcome*) highlighted 8 schools in California which have high rates of poverty, a majority of minority students, and many English language learners, yet rank in the top 3 deciles statewide. The accomplishments of these high-poverty, high-performing schools serve to dispel the myth that such children cannot excel. Additionally, the release of the 2002 API Base indicates that these schools maintained or improved their statewide rank for 2002. This type of achievement provides encouraging models for low-performing schools struggling with student success.

### **The Future of the API Calculation**

Currently the API is only a calculation of academic test scores. But the PSAA allows for the inclusion of other factors like graduation rates and attendance rates of students and faculty. In fact, the law only requires that test scores constitute at least 60 percent of the API. However, there is legitimate concern that the inclusion of non-performance indicators will water down the proper emphasis on student/school achievement.

### **No Child Left Behind Conformity (NCLB) Federal Accountability Conformity**

The federal NCLB Act of 2001 includes specific accountability requirements for the states. California, already having established a formal accountability system, needed to address the "Adequate Yearly Progress" (AYP) requirement set forth by the federal legislation. Federal law requires that schools show "adequate yearly progress" in getting all students proficient in reading and mathematics, while the California API incorporates student performance for all subjects. Therefore, the State Board of Education sent a proposal to the federal government detailing California's desire to maintain the API while supplementing it with the AYP requirements as another element of each school's accountability report. The proposal is currently under review by the US Department of Education. A final approval is expected by May 2003.

### **Test Preparation for Upcoming Testing**

*The California STAR Reading List: A parent's tool to improve student performance*

In 1999, Senator Poochigian authored Senate Bill 578, which required the publisher of the STAR test to make available to each school district a customized reading list for each student in grades 2-11 (adopted into Senate Bill 366 Chapter 735, Statutes of 1999). The customized list is available to parents or guardians of each individual student at the same time the STAR scores are sent home, which enables parents to identify those books that may encourage their child to read and improve the child's vocabulary.

[Click here to view the STAR Reading List.](#)